2016 – 2018; 5th Moscow biennale for young art

Community-based participative management project
Duration: approx. 2 years
Project start: Jan 2016
Key figures: Alexander Minchenko, Alexandra Novozhenova, Anton Baranov, Anastasia Ryabova, Bona Vladovskaya, Sofya Ovchinnikova et al.

'The committee has grown out of chaotic yet strictly administered collaboration between the appallingly disconnected members of a group formed around the epic workshop INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSION–XXI CENTURY.

Burdened by mutual influences, common dependency, and their ceaseless struggle against each other, they gave been trying to make anything but an exhibition. In a time where time seems to have come to an end, they are ready to put their obscure but already groundless ambitions to use in an attempt to find out which of them will define what art is in a hundred years.

Their struggle will become visible in a number of places, which this new tribe of gangsters has been annexing in a fit of unjustified greed in order to build their unspecialized fortress. Making use of the square meters they have found in a house, a museum, a shop, america, on the outskirts, in a palace – has become the main goal for the group of artists, where each one is not only eager to show their own work, but gets involved in what their neighbours are doing, plotting and scheming against them.

We say: touch the other (let him move ever!) Hoorah!'

Artists' collective led by the COMMITTEE– XXI

The Committee–XXI (or the Committee of twenty-first century) is an attempt to build a community whose main task is not a result, but the process of communication, ranging from overcoming pinpoints of bureaucratic structures of state institutions to social media marketing tools and presentations of imaginary projects.

Putting communication at the central position of community tasks, the ability to talk, listen and negotiate as the main values are key points by many self-organized communities. However, in our case the greatest problem was the very possibility of existence of the association. Periodically it seemed that everything could end at any moment: collective action should have, if not a single goal, then at least a common carrier, but a community built on weak and episodic links could not form a structure supporting it.

The Committee emerged during the 'Introduction to the profession. XXI Century' seminar sessions, organized by art historian Alexandra Novozhenova and artist Anastasia Ryabova in the Rodchenko art-school, Moscow, and united students from different art institutions. Many participants were intimately aware of the uncertainty and impossibility to find their subject of research, problem or medium, and the only stimulus for unification was a certain time and place of meetings, as well as online communication, followed by a complete lack of activity during its breaks. This was a fundamental moment that excluded the emergence of the leader and strong vector of development.

The ability to build various models of cooperation and interaction within the community, which – we really believe in this statement – has a much greater potential for natural development within a frame of rigidly established vertical of competences and responsibilities is the another important feature of the organization.

For the outsiders view, the committee seeks to maintain the image of a successful structure with the clear tasks set, which has all the resources for their implementation (the availability of projects and the willingness to present them to competitive commissions and boards is the main one among them).

Even at the first stage of development it has avoided the risk of "non-recognition" because of acting as a formally created enterprise structure, rather than an artistic community, whose recognition depends on the opinions of critics and the long history of active creative process, which made the committee more familiar with the official institutions and gave it more weight.

The developed directive task – the reservation of the largest number of places and sites for the 'cascade of exhibitions openings' – was implemented with tools used by institutions, commercial and state companies to increase visitors loyalty, promote an imaginary product or service.

For the realization, several completely different sites were chosen in Moscow and the Moscow region: a music club, a skate park, the Central architects house (the ex-Soviet club of the professional community), a manor that became a boarding house, the weekend city festival 'Forma', the Moscow Museum of Modern Art , Workshops of the Smirnov and Sorokin art fund for the support of contemporary art, the apartment of the artist Viktor Skersis in the US.

Some of above mentioned places after a lengthy document circulations and talks turned out to be unavailable, and in some of them unauthorized actions were committed.

In 2015–2016, the completion of the process of turning museums into units of the cultural industry, using all means to attract and entertain visitors, has become noticeable in the flow of advertising content traffic generated in social networks and media. Promotion of events began to be made bydevertising and PR-agencies, without help of museum and gallery employees, as it was before, and visitors attendance numbers became the main index of event success.

In fact, the main form of art presentation has transformed into festivals, offering an excessive number of events in short time, evenly distributed across the city center area.

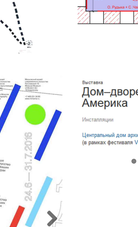
The period of activity of the Committee of the XXI century fell on the 5th Moscow Biennale for Young Art preparation and opening, and new tendencies of its promotion and structure led to the decision to "capture" the biennial media space with the use of both traditional and online media publications and high activity in the Facebook (which plays an important role in attracting visitors to entertainment, educational and artistic events in Russia in general).

In fact, the Committee worked as a kind of event-agency with the aim to provide good attendance and feedback for the project activities united under **dom – dvorets – salon – muzei – america – otshib** (house – palace – saloon – museum – america – offset) name, while striving:
– minimize the volume of created own content both in the form of artifacts (art objects at exhibitions) and in the hybrid information space (all publications were created automatically using a special script, mixing phrases and offering various information sources and key figures working in the cultural industry);
– fill in all reserved places (the volume is more important than the content);
– try not to have talks with site owners and curators about realized or fully prepared projects during the reservation of the places;
– provide the maximum conversion into visitors with the help of advertising material.

It should be noted that because of the large number of the Committee participants, the ratio and degree of inclusion varied. Some regarded it as a project of a "serious" exhibition planning, some as an art project by Ryabova and Novozhenova.

All various types of activity, many of which ended with the rest of the action in one place or another, can be represented with a single tool – the process documentation, because the actions were not originally aimed at the final state in which a work of art or tangible result appears.

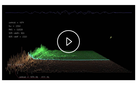
The project management, which aims to find means and other resources to promote events, is perhaps the main result of the Committee activities and the only work of art presented during its functioning.



Dom (Architect community building)
7/1 Granatny, Moscow

After long talks and preliminary acceptance of the Committee's exhibition the chief director started to demand fee as for a commercial building leasing.

By the date of our presumable exhibition, the other had opened, and that one was about young architects' educational achievements. At the end we connected to the students and held an open talk with them discussing about their view on art and differences between art and architecture. The meeting was announced as Moscow biennale official educational program.



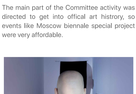
Dvorets (Sukhanovo manor)
Sukhanovo, Leninsky district, Moscow region

This place had become unavailable after meetings with district administration. The main work planned here was the installation of light beacon on the old manor's tower and its live video streaming to one of official Moscow art spaces. In main cities administration serve contemporary art as one force of gentrification, but unlike in the western world they tend to think the only usage of their spaces and areas as the greatest honor to the artists. So, all other problems (production, visitor services etc.) became artists own problems.

Finally the Committee members carried the operating light appliance along the manor's fence, and the documentation of the performance appeared at Forma weekend festival.

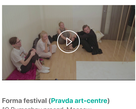
Salon (Aglomerat club)
3/12 Kostomarovsky, Moscow

The Committee members took part in exhibition opening during Moscow underground rave fest "Skotoboinya' (Slaughterhouse) was at its full power behind the door.



Muzei (Moscow museum of modern art)
10 Gogolevsky, Moscow

The main part of the Committee activity was directed to get into official art history, so events like Moscow biennale special project were very affordable.



America (Viktor Skersis residence)
880 Laurel Drive, Bethlehem, PA, 18017, USA

A tele–presentation exhibition was held in the USA with help of Viktor Skersis, russian conceptual artist. The members of the Committee have shown their works via video streaming services, discussed them with Viktor and took part in a short discussion after that.

Forma festival (Pravda art-centre)
19 Bumazhny proezd, Moscow

Otshib (Smirnov and Sorokin art fund workshops)
27 Burakova, Moscow

The event was active on online space only, and art fund's workshops were used as symbolic promotion of the well-known place only.

Committee-XXI Review

Committee-XXI Study Guide

Alexander Minchenko `s archive
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